37 NEW Ways to See the World P.29

FEEL SMART AGAIN

mental_floss®

SPECIAL EDITION PHOTO ISSUE

MOROCCO'S GUTSIEST BIKER GANG P.42

ARCHITECTURE THAT DEFIES GEOMETRY P.30

NEW YORK'S UNDERGROUND SECRETS P.52

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Plus POODLE ENTHUSIASTS, PIGEON FANCIERS, AND SWITZERLAND'S ANSWER TO SANTA-CON P.38

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2015
VOLUME 14, ISSUE 1
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PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT DICKERSON

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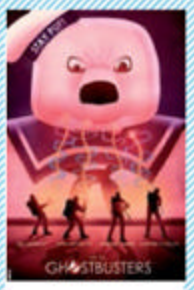

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ILLUSTRATION BY JOEY PARLETT (LOST AND FOUND). ILLUSTRATION BY MATT FERGUSON (ANGRY STAY PUFT). ISTOCK (EAMES CHAIR, CHEESE PUFFS). *THE AMERICANS* BY ROBERT FRANK PUBLISHED BY STEIDL/WWW.STEIDL.DE ('ELEVATOR-MIAMI BEACH'). PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAY GOULD (ROCKET)

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HOW TO MAKE YOUR MAGAZINE-IN-A-MAGAZINE

STEP THREE
MAKE 'EM LAUGH
HA HA HA
WHAT DID CINDERELLA SAY WHEN SHE DROPPED OFF HER FILM?
SOME DAY MY PRINTS WILL COME!
WHY DON'T THEY GIVE DINOSAURS DRIVERS LICENSES?
BECAUSE THEY TYRANNOSAURUS WRECKS.
HOW DO YOU TAKE A PHOTO AT THE BOTTOM OF THE OCEAN?
USE A CLAMERA!

HOW TO TAKE THE PERFECT PORTRAIT

3 EASY STEPS

STEP ONE

KEEP STILL

DIG YOUR ELBOWS INTO YOUR SIDE & USE 2 HANDS TO HOLD YOUR PHONE

STEP TWO

CHANGE YOUR PERSPECTIVE

STAND UP HIGH

OR CROUCH DOWN LOW

AN EYE LEVEL PHOTO IS A BORING PHOTO

TELL BORING TO TAKE A HIKE BY ADDING LENSES TO YOUR PHONE

A Case for Hope

THE DAY WE WERE PUTTING THE FINISHING touches on this issue, there was an image on *The New York Times* homepage of an angry group of people overturning a police car, its rear windshield shattered. A fresh wave of violence had broken out in Ferguson, Mo., after a grand jury declined to charge the police officer who shot an African-American teenager there. FURY BOILS FROM PLAINS TO BOTH COASTS, the headline read.

There's been no shortage of bad news lately, between and beyond the American coasts. From Afghanistan to Liberia and Sierra Leone to Syria and Iraq, 2014 was, by all accounts, a really tough year. Of course, the news isn't what we cover at *mental_floss*. It's not that we don't think it's important to understand what's happening right now; on the contrary, we know it's vital. So vital, in fact, that we've made it our mission to tell stories you won't hear anywhere else: stories that provide a deeper appreciation for the world's incredible diversity and history. We trust that you use these stories alongside the news to put your world into context.

This issue is special—it's our first-ever photography issue—but it's no different in focus. It's a new year, and we thought it was time for a shift in perspective. Because the way we see it, no matter how much bad news there is in a day, there's also good news: stories that give us reasons to be optimistic about the future, make us pause to marvel at the wonders of the planet, and bring us small moments of joy that just don't need justification. So we set out to collect hard visual proof of this and we found much more than we could squeeze into 68 pages: adventurers exploring new terrain (page 44), cities investing in their streets (page 48), young men investing in their futures (page 34), women shattering stereotypes and glass ceilings (page 42, page 54), a new generation imagining a future among the stars (page 50).

In the 1950s, when the Swiss photographer Robert Frank was crisscrossing the country in a Ford coupe snapping shots of people on elevators and in trolleys, he was singularly undoing the myth that America was a homogenous land of apple pie and prosperity. (His full story is on page 23.) The book he created, *The Americans,* was taken as a social critique but, as Frank put it, "Criticism can come out of love." This issue is inspired by that idea. It's our effort to undo the myth that the modern world is just a world of violence, injustice, and unrest. And it absolutely comes out of love.

@jessanne

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WHAT'S THE BEST BOOK OR MOVIE FEATURING... A TRAIN VOYAGE?

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THE JOURNEY OF NATTY GANN

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BEFORE SUNRISE

PLANES, TRAINS & AUTOMOBILES

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When he saw photographs taken inside Egypt's pyramids, 23-year-old **MOHAMMAD REZA DOMIRI GANJI** was inspired to give architectural photography a shot. Never mind the fact that he has no formal photography training and learned his technique from watching Internet videos: The kaledescopic images he captures in mosques and other buildings in his native Iran ("Infinity in a Room," page 30) are absolutely stunning.

Chapel Hill, N.C.–based German visual artist **GESCHE WÜRFEL** has a degree in urban planning and a particular interest in how class, gender, and race interact with space, which gave rise to her series on the basement sanctuaries of New York City building superintendents ("Beauty in a Basement," page 52). Her work has been featured in *The New York Times,* Slate, and *WIRED*.

Photographer **HASSAN HAJJAJ**, a native of Morocco who now lives in London, also designs furniture, clothes, and record covers. If you look closely at his images of Moroccan women on motorbikes ("Beyond the Cloth," page 42), you'll notice that the frames he's designed around them contain niches in which he has stowed graphic everyday objects like cans of soda and tomatoes. Among many others, his work appears in the Brooklyn Museum, Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, and the Nasher Museum at Duke University.

When you see the sets **ANDI CORTELLINI** and **URSULA SPRECHER** and designed for their series of portraits of European hobbyists ("Strength in Numbers," page 38) you won't be surprised to learn that their book *Hobby Buddies* took seven years to complete! Although the photos are staged, their enthusiast subjects are very real—and very active in their respective clubs.

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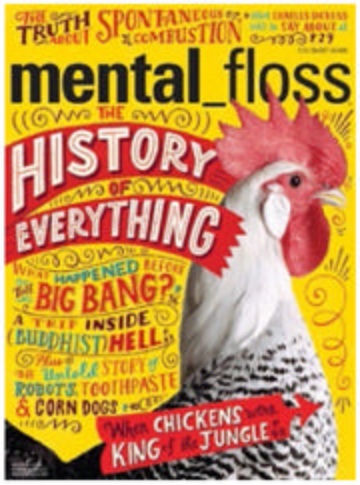
MIJOO KIM (WÜRFEL). JENNY FREMONT (HAJJAJ). COURTESY PHOTOGRAPHERS (GANJI, CORTELLINI, SPRECHER)

Old-Fashioned Letter of the Month

I'm a high school English teacher. A couple of years ago, I started bringing *mental_floss* to my classroom. I had a student who never did anything. I couldn't even get him to write his name on papers, let alone read. One day I had a new issue on my desk and he asked if he could read it. I used this as leverage: For the rest of the semester he'd do his work just to read one. So, thank you for encouraging younger ones to read ... oh, and for making my job easier! **—Ana Duran**


THE TRUTH ABOUT SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION
mental_floss
THE HISTORY OF EVERYTHING
HAPPENED BEFORE THE BIG BANG?
A TRUE INSIDE (BUDDHIST) HELL
ROBOTS, TOOTHPASTE & CORN DOGS
When CHICKENS were KING of the JUNGLE

To celebrate our photo issue, we're featuring YOU (featuring us).

Clockwise from top left: Rebecca Palter and her enviable collection; Deidra Jackson of the Ole Miss School of Journalism; Meghan McGuckin has Big Questions in Istanbul; Sgt. Jerilyn McConchie in Afghanistan

Having an extremely difficult time focusing on this essay due to a *mental_floss* magazine calling me from across the library.
@nelson_stone27

If *mental_floss* were a daily, I'd be reading #allday #everyday
@Braden_Keith

Every trip to the airport needs two things: patience, and *mental_floss*
@RossBo2

Send feedback to letters@mentalfloss.com or tweet it @mental_floss. If we print your comment, we'll send you a T-shirt from store.mentalfloss.com.

MENTAL FLAWS
We pressed our luck and forgot to credit Liz Hanellin with photographing game show guru Michael Souveroff ["The Game Show Hustler," November 2014]. Sorry, Liz!

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FROM THE WEB

FEEL SMART AGAIN AT MENTALFLOSS.COM/STW

- Why Are Some Letters Missing From NYC Subway?
- 8 Obscure Twists on Monopoly
- Time-lapse of Colorful Alaskan Nights

- The Sad Story of Elvis Presley's Senior Prom
- 11 Ways Kids Used to Soup Up Their Bikes

Where does space begin?

It's much closer than you think. For the full answer, go to ***mentalfloss.com/space.***

ISTOCK (ROCKET, HORN, ALASKA); LIZ HANELLIN ("THE GAME SHOW HUSTLER"); COURTESY READERS (YOU FEATURING US)

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ITALY

Your Way, Our Secrets

In Italy, beauty is everywhere. The food and wine. Sea and countryside. Sing-songy language. And a people so warm and passionate about life.

After years of living and traveling throughout Italy, and experiencing firsthand so much of this beauty, I decided to create Ciao Andiamo. To help you discover and fall in love with all the authentic beauty and wonder that is Italy. ~Jonathan, Founder

Ciao ANDIAMO

Start Planning Your Italy Adventure Today | www.ciaoandiamo.com

Photos by Ksenija Savic Photography

SCATTER BRAIN

THIS MONTH'S THEME

TRAINS

THE DOG THAT OWNED THE RAILS ›
HAVE YOU SEEN PETE SEEGER'S BANJO? ›
CLARK GABLE WAS A HOBO ›
3 USES FOR RETIRED TRAIN CARS ›

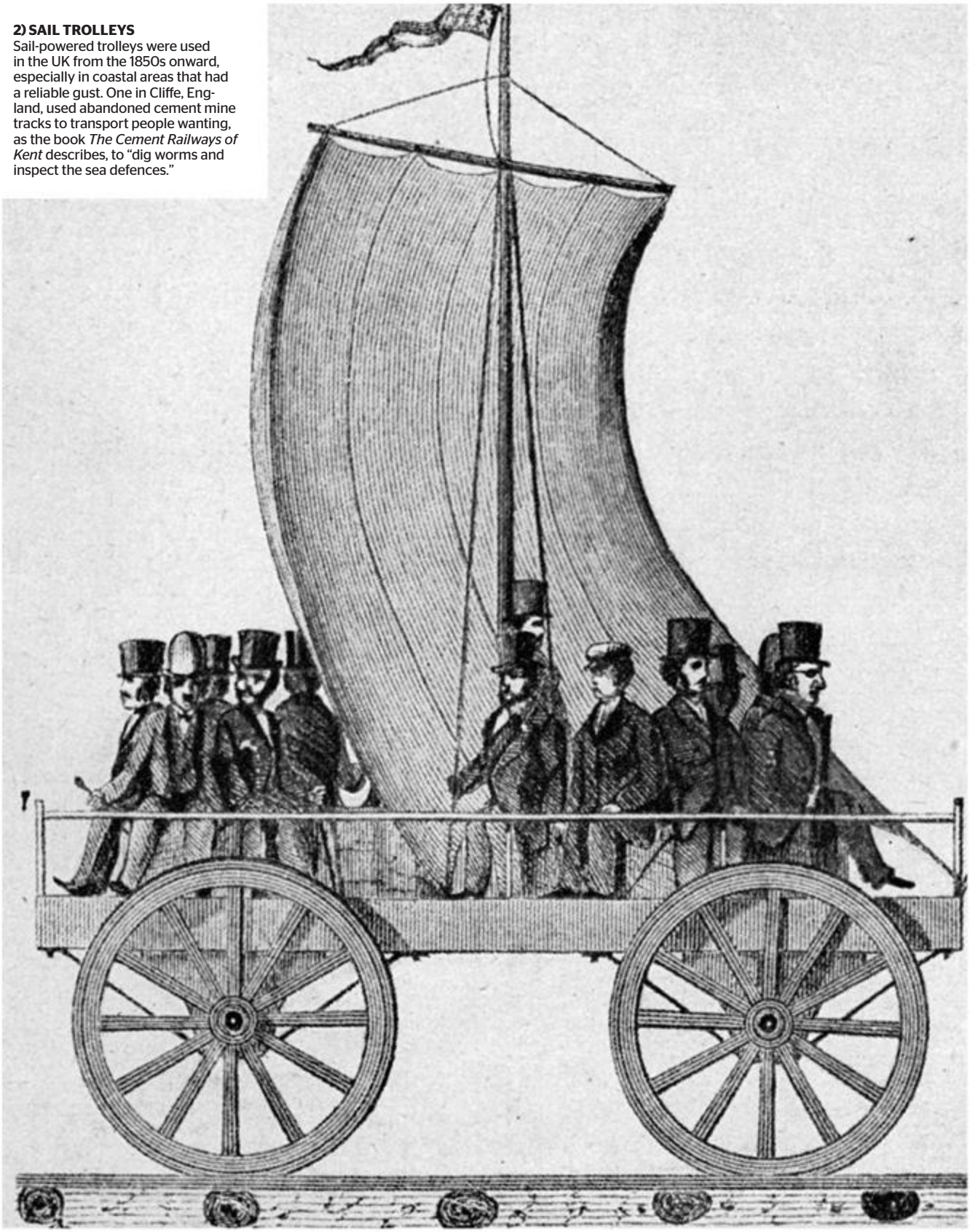
8 Crazy Trains in History

German engineer Franz Kruckenberg had an idea: why not build a train that worked like a blimp? It was the late 1920s and he was a zeppelin designer by training, but he'd recently turned his attention to the rails. He'd tried his hand at creating a hanging monorail, but when that failed he decided to try something new—a streamlined, aluminum bullet train powered by a giant propeller. This time, it worked! Built in 1930, the **Propellertriebwagen Schienenzeppelin** was as fast and smooth as its name was long. Zooming at an unprecedented 140 mph, the engine set a speed record that would stand for another 23 years. So why aren't today's Amtraks propeller-powered? The (extremely noisy paddles) that made the train run also prevented cars from coupling to each other, so the Schienenzeppelin wasn't actually much of a train.

SEE THE OTHERS

ALAMY

2) SAIL TROLLEYS
Sail-powered trolleys were used in the UK from the 1850s onward, especially in coastal areas that had a reliable gust. One in Cliffe, England, used abandoned cement mine tracks to transport people wanting, as the book *The Cement Railways of Kent* describes, to "dig worms and inspect the sea defences."



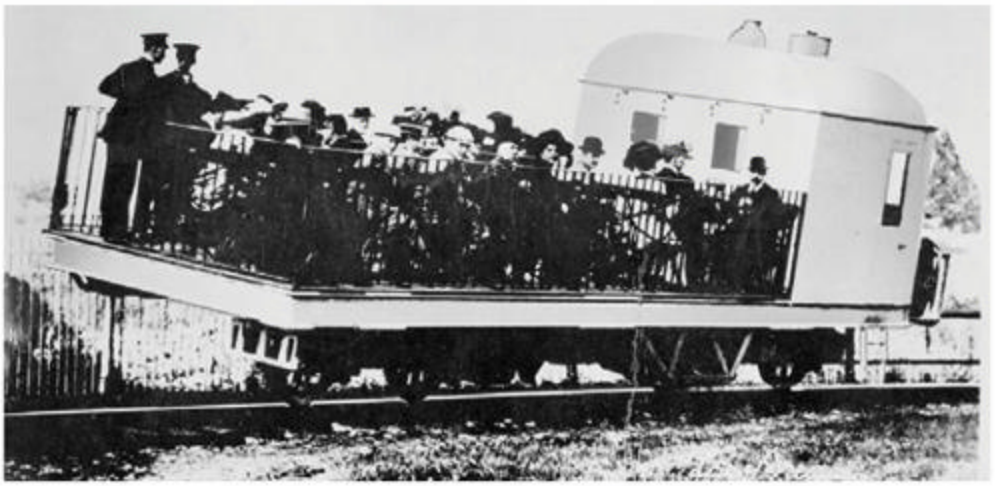
→ **THE BOTTOM LINE:** A FEW YEARS BEFORE JOHN WILKES BOOTH ASSASSINATED ABRAHAM LINCOLN,

3) PENYDARREN LOCOMOTIVE
Not to be confused with a deluxe barbecue smoker, Richard Trevithick's 1804 locomotive was the first steam engine to successfully run on rails. On its first run, the 7-ton train maxed out at 5 mph. The train was so heavy that it made only three journeys, breaking the cast-iron rails every time.

4) THE HOLMAN LOCOMOTIVE
Built in 1887 to swindle gullible investors, the Holman had wheels on wheels on wheels. Impressive, but they did nothing to make the train run better. Locomotive authority Angus Sinclair said it had the same value as "throwing gold coin over Niagara Falls." Nonetheless, a test run helped sell a few phony stocks.

5) GEORGE BENNIE'S RAILPLANE
Suspended by steel trestles, the train-plane hybrid hung from an overhead rail and was pushed along by two airplane propellers. Projected to cruise at 120 to 150 mph, a prototype ran in Milngavie, Scotland in 1930, but a lack of funding left the idea literally hanging.

6) BEACH PNEUMATIC TRANSIT
New York City's first subway was a pneumatic tube. Built under Broadway in 1869, a giant rotary blower nicknamed the "Western Tornado" pushed a single car down the track. The system was slow and loud, and it was shut down after a stock market crash in Europe caused investors to lose interest.



7) GYROSCOPIC MONORAIL
Louis Brennan's 1903 "gyro-car locomotive" teetered on one rail and leaned at corners like a motorcycle. Two gyroscopic stabilizers helped the car lean around bends, standing erect even when stopped. In 1910, the train debuted in London, carrying 50 passengers, including Winston Churchill. But it still flopped: One was scrapped and another was made into a park shelter.

8) MAGLEVS
Magnetically levitating trains—called maglevs—literally float on a cushion of air. Recently tested in Japan and Germany, the rails are lined with strong electromagnets. The repellant force makes the train float up to four inches above the track; since there's no friction with the rails, the trains can reach 311 mph!

ALAMY (SAIL TROLLEY, MAGLEV) GETTY (MONORAIL)

BOOTH'S BROTHER, EDWIN, SAVED THE PRESIDENT'S ELDEST SON, ROBERT, FROM FALLING OFF A TRAIN.

A Tail on the Rails

How a globe-trotting dog defied canine-mailman relations

OWNEY THE DOG WAS NOT YOUR USUAL MUTT: Instead of chasing mailmen, the pup preferred chasing mailbags. In 1888, the mixed-breed terrier became a beloved fixture at the post office in Albany, New York. There, he developed a reputation for following mailbags wherever they went. In fact, he'd often hop onto mail wagons and follow the letters as they were stuffed onto trains. Workers for the U.S. Railway Mail Service got so used to the pup that they eventually let him ride the rails.

By the 1890s, Owney was crisscrossing the nation—and he was racking up serious miles. The dog independently traveled every major rail line and passed through nearly all 48 lower states. A symbol of good luck, Owney became the post office's official mascot and, as one postmaster put it, the "pet of 100,000 postal employees." Each night, the pup would cuddle up with bags of mail, protecting them from strangers. Newspapers caught wind and obsessed over the nomadic pup, with the *Highland Recorder* remarking that "[Owney has] traveled more miles than some of the wealthiest sightseers." The mutt also had more jewelry than the richest train passengers—everywhere he went, postal workers and companies attached special tags and medals to his collar. The dog traveled so much that he amassed about 1,000 tags, and a special doggie-jacket had to be made to hold all his swag.

On August 19, 1895, Owney set his sights beyond America. A publicity stunt inspired by Jules Verne's *Around the World in 80 Days* was organized to have Owney ride rails around the globe. Boarding a steamship out of Tacoma, Washington, he traveled to Japan, China, Singapore, the Suez Canal, New York, and back to Tacoma. He met foreign dignitaries and even caused some European newspapers to lament that their continent wasn't on the itinerary. The trip made Owney the most famous dog in the world. In 1897, after nine years of travel and thousands of miles to his name, the professional publicity hound officially retired in Toledo. Today you can see him at the Smithsonian.

—HANNAH KEYSER

ILLUSTRATION BY BEN KIRCHNER

STRANDED AT A RURAL TRAIN STATION, WILLIAM H. TAFT WIRED A DESPERATE TELEGRAM: "LARGE PARTY

+ DO THE MATH

THE TRANS-SIBERIAN RAILWAY

Russia's still-expanding train line is the longest in the world.

5,778

MILES LONG

THAT'S

1,433 miles longer than the Amazon River

3 times as long as America's First Trans-continental Railroad

278 miles longer than the Great Wall of China

COMPLETED IN 1916,

IT TOOK

25 years to build and **$1 BILLION**

20% OF RUSSIA'S DEBT

120 MILLION

TONS OF CARGO &

30% OF RUSSIA'S EXPORTS

move along its route each year.

$1,062 → FIRST CLASS TICKET

$329* → THIRD CLASS TICKET

*(Although you'll share the car's two toilets with 54 people.)

A Brief Manifesto Against Trains: 1830

PRINTED IN THE VINCENNES, INDIANA, *WESTERN SUN*

Twenty miles an hour, sir! Why, you will not be able to keep an apprentice-boy at his work: every Saturday evening he must take a trip to Ohio, to spend the Sabbath with his sweetheart. Grave plodding citizens will be flying about like comets. All local attachments must be at an end. It will encourage flightiness of intellect. Veracious people will turn into the most immeasurable liars; all their conceptions will be exaggerated by their magnificent notions of distance ... Upon the whole, sir, it is a pestilential, topsy-turvy, harum-scarum whirligig. Give me the old, solemn, straightforward, regular Dutch canal—three miles an hour for expresses, and two for jog-and-trot journeys—with a yoke of oxen for a heavy load! I go for beasts of burthen: it is more primitive and scriptural, and suits a moral and religious people better. None of your hop-skip-and-jump whimsies for me.

–ANONYMOUS CANAL STOCKHOLDER

In the 1880s, a baboon worked as a signalman for nine years on a South African railroad. He was paid in brandy and never made a mistake.

WAITING." WHEN THE TRAIN ARRIVED, HE BOARDED AND SAID "GO AHEAD. I AM THE LARGE PARTY."

Lost and Found

Help us recover some of the items that have been misplaced on trains over the years!

Illustration by Joey Parlett

LOST
Rare Buddhist scripture
A Tibetan scholar was so excited to see London mayor Boris Johnson riding the Tube that he accidentally left his laptop on the train. The computer contained the lama's life's work: two unfinished books and nearly 1,000 pages of rare 17th-century Buddhist scripture.

FOUND
A boa constrictor named Penelope
In 2011, a woman wearing a three-foot-long snake around her neck realized the pet serpent had slithered away. Since nobody could find it, authorities confidently declared that "the trains are absolutely snake-free." Turns out, they were wrong. Penelope hid out in an adjacent car for an entire month.

LOST
One of only two copies of *The Boy Castaways*
J.M. Barrie, the creator of the character Peter Pan, published just two copies of his story *The Boy Castaways*. One is protected inside Yale's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. The other is still missing after being lost on a train in 1901.

FOUND
Paintings by Gauguin
In the 1970s, a Gauguin still life was found on an Italian train—but nobody knew it was by Gauguin. An art-loving auto worker bought the painting at an auction and it hung on his wall for more than 40 years, its owner oblivious of its origin. Police later determined that the painting, worth $48 million, had been stolen from a London home.

LOST
A violin concerto
British composer Havergal Brian spent a whole year writing his first violin concerto. He finished the draft in June 1934, stuffed it in a briefcase, and promptly lost the bag containing it at London's Victoria Station. Starting from scratch, Brian took another whole year to finish his Violin Concerto No. 2.

FOUND
A 300-year-old Stradivarius violin
Each worth millions, about 600 Stradivarius violins still exist. In 2012, a musician lent his rare instrument to a friend so he could play it at a birthday party. But the real surprise came when his buddy accidentally left it on a train in Bern, Switzerland. Thankfully, a good Samaritan turned it in.

LOST
Early Ernest Hemingway
In 1922, Hemingway's wife Hadley was planning to visit her husband in Switzerland. So she packed up all of his papers in a suitcase and boarded a train in Paris. But while the locomotive sat at a station, Hadley decided to grab a bottle of Evian water and left the suitcase on the train. When she returned, the suitcase was gone. It had contained all of Hemingway's early fiction. Then unpublished as a novelist, Papa griped to Ezra Pound, "All that remains of my complete works are three pencil drafts of a bum poem..."

FOUND
Pete Seeger's banjo
The folksinger knew a thing about trains. Living as a vagabond in the 1930s, Seeger rode freighters across the country. But in 2000, the singer reportedly forgot his famed banjo while riding from New York City to Poughkeepsie. The instrument was faithfully taken to a lost and found, where it was reunited with Seeger.

LOST
T.E. Lawrence's original *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*
Following the Arab Revolt of 1916 to 1918, "Lawrence of Arabia" decided to put his experiences abroad on paper. But after nearly one year of work, he accidentally misplaced the suitcase containing the 250,000-word draft at Reading Station. Lawrence started all over again, calling the second version we read today "hopelessly bad."

IN THE 1970S, THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION WAS CONVINCED THAT PODCARS WERE THE

FUTURE OF RAIL TRAVEL, SETTING ASIDE $6 MILLION TO INSTALL SYSTEMS ALL ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

8 Lifehacks ... From Hobos

At the 1889 National Hobo Convention in St. Louis, a strict ethical code was established for all hobos to follow. Here are some tips we all could all use, no matter what you carry in your rucksack.

1. "Always seek out jobs nobody wants."
2. "Decide your own life. Don't let another person run or rule you."
3. "Try to stay clean, and boil up wherever possible."
4. "Do not cause problems in a train yard. Another hobo will be coming along who will need passage though that yard."
5. "When no employment is available, make your own work by using your added talents at crafts."
6. "When jungling in town, respect handouts, do not wear them out. Another hobo will be coming along who will need them as bad, if not worse than you."
7. "Always respect nature. Do not leave garbage where you are jungling."
8. "Help all runaway children and try to induce them to return home."

THE HOBO HALL OF FAME

WOODY GUTHRIE (1912–1967)
A folk legend, Guthrie wrote over 1,000 songs, singing often in hobo jungles and migrant camps.

JACK LONDON
The author started hopping trains at 16 and spent years riding cross-country looking for work. He later immortalized the experiences in his 1907 memoir, *The Road*.

JAMES MICHENER
Hobo-turned-author Michener's first novel was adapted into the well-known musical *South Pacific*.

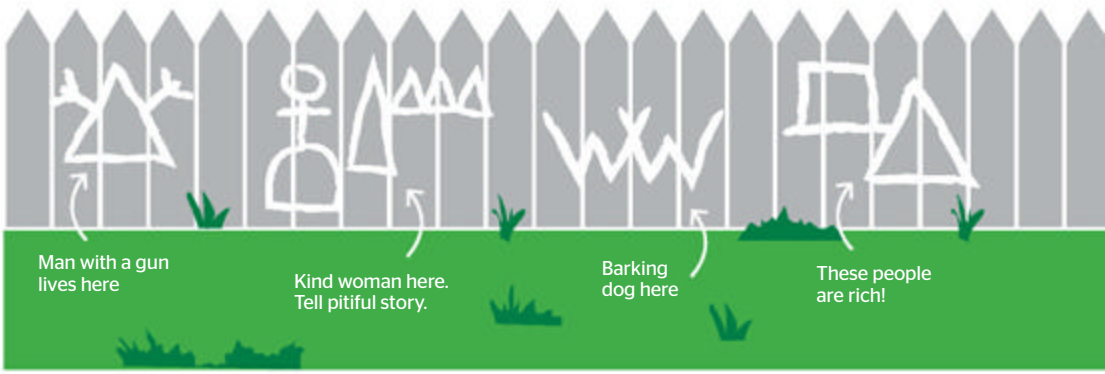
JACK "THE MANASSA MAULER" DEMPSEY
Rail-hopping for five years must have toughened Dempsey, who reigned as the world heavyweight boxing champ from 1919 to 1926.

WILLIAM O. DOUGLAS
To attend law school at Columbia University, he allegedly hoboed from Washington to New York, ending with $0.06 in his pocket. He'd be a Supreme Court justice.

ALAMY

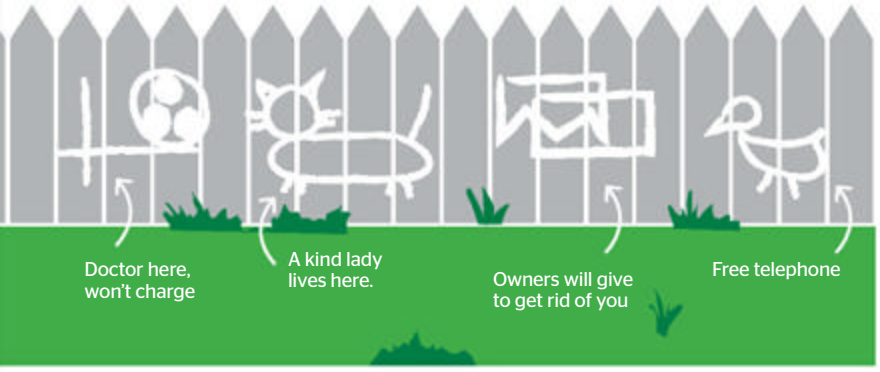
HOW TO READ HOBOGLYPHS

Most Depression-era vagabonds were illiterate, but that didn't stop them from developing a widely used secret code. These markings—called hoboglyphs—were strategically drawn (with chalk or a pocketknife) on surfaces like picket fences and utility poles, alerting fellow hobos to what a given area had in store. By design, hoboglyphs looked like meaningless graffiti, but the system worked rather well. —MARK MANCINI



FROM 1915 TO 1929, HOBOS HAD A BONA FIDE NEWSPAPER, "HOBO NEWS." IT HAD A CIRCULATION OF ABOUT

CLARK GABLE (1901–1960)
Once a hobo. Later the "King of Hollywood."
WINTHROP ROCKEFELLER
The governor of Arkansas reportedly kept in touch with a vagabond buddy from his freight-hopping days—even after entering professional politics.
BURL IVES
A prolific folk singer, you might know his voice best from Sam the Snowman in the stop-motion animation Christmas TV special *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*.
CARL SANDBURG
Before he became a three-time Pulitzer Prize–winning writer, a teenage Sandburg rode across six states for a year looking for work.



BEHIND THE MUSIC

The true story of 5 classic railway tunes

1. "I'VE BEEN WORKING ON THE RAILROAD"
Originally, the song was about levees. Black laborers popularized it in the 1830s, later switching the lyrics as they began building railroads. The name "Dinah" typically referred to a female slave. And back then, the lyrics were PG-13. One verse goes: "Someone's making love [1] to Dinah / Someone's making love I know. / Someone's making love to Dinah, / 'cause I can't hear the old banjo."[1]

2. "DOWNTOWN TRAIN"
Although Tom Waits wrote the song, Rod Stewart made it a mainstream hit in 1989. It makes sense: Rod Stewart is a model train nut. While touring, he often works on train set pieces to relax. His Beverly Hills home boasts a sprawling 23 x 124-foot landscape of post-war Manhattan and Chicago, which he built himself. It almost takes up the whole third floor!

3. "BALLAD OF JOHN HENRY"
According to historian Scott R. Nelson, John William Henry was a free black Union soldier who had been jailed in Virginia during the 1870s. Henry was leased to a railway to help blast tunnels, but unlike the myth, he probably didn't die from a burst heart. Instead, the infamous steam drills, which kicked up clouds of silica dust, likely caused Henry to die of silicosis, a lung disease. However, historians still argue whether he or another real-life John Henry inspired the song.

4. *RHAPSODY IN BLUE*
George Gershwin was en route to Boston when he dreamed up *Rhapsody*. "It was on the train, with its steely rhythms, its rattle-ty bang, that is often so stimulating to a composer—I frequently hear music in the very heart of noise ... and there I suddenly heard, and even saw on paper—the complete construction of the *Rhapsody*, from beginning to end," he told biographer Isaac Goldberg.

5. "CRAZY TRAIN"
Black Sabbath's two model railroad junkies cooked up this song in 1980. Guitarist Randy Rhoads and bassist Bob Daisley—both model train collectors—were working on riffs when Randy's pedals made a "weird kind of chugging sound" in the amp. "Randy, that sounds like a train," Bob said, recalling the event for the website Songfacts. "But it sounds nuts—a crazy train."

1. Of course, back then, "making love" meant flirting.

20,000, WAS ADVERTISEMENT FREE, AND WAS DISTRIBUTED BY AND FOR HOMELESS MIGRANT WORKERS.

Monopoly Money

The family board game that foiled the greatest train heist in history

On August 8, 1963, a Royal Mail train puffed toward London carrying £2.6 million in cash. It was the dead of night, and the old tattered bank notes were destined for a government furnace, where they'd be permanently taken out of circulation. But 15 crooks hiding in the darkness had different plans. Wielding crowbars, the thieves held up the train. The criminals worked quickly, tossing 120 sacks of dough off the train and onto a getaway truck. When the heist was complete, the men fled with their convoy to a nearby farmhouse and did what any group of bored bandits would do to celebrate the largest cash heist in history: They played *Monopoly*.

Days later, the criminals had to abandon the farmhouse to evade police, who'd picked up their trail. When Scotland Yard got to the hideout, they found 20 empty mailbags, sleeping bags, and bank note wrappers—and a *Monopoly* board covered in fingerprints. (Apparently, they'd been playing with real money.) Those prints, along with more found on a ketchup bottle, led to some arrests the very next day. Eventually, all 15 robbers landed in the slammer, learning that "get out of jail free" cards are decidedly hard to find in the real world. —CAITLIN SCHNEIDER

Alec Baldwin, Ringo Starr, and George Carlin all narrated for Thomas the Tank Engine and Friends.

SECOND LIFE

Three creative uses for retired railroad relics

CHURCHES
In Russia, abandoned train cars are salvaged for salvation. Orthodox Christians in small villages are known to resurrect old cars from the scrap heap, adding onion domes and building new facades to convert them into community churches. But not all of the cars are grounded. Similar to the dining cars on luxury trains, some Russian train lines carry church cars. One, the Saint Luka train, travels to settlements in far-off Siberia tugging a mobile Orthodox church with free medical care.

ARTIST STUDIOS
While New York City dumps its retired subway cars into the Atlantic Ocean for fish-friendly artificial reefs, some decrepit carriages in the London Tube are being sent in the opposite direction: up. In 2007, the organization Village Underground converted graffiti-smattered Jubilee line trains into artist studios, stacking the retired cars on an abandoned warehouse. The offices can hold up to 50 people, and the company plans to build more in Lisbon, Berlin, and other cities.

CLASSICAL CONCERT HALLS
In the 1920s, a coffee craze boomed in São Paulo, Brazil. To keep up with demand, coffee barons built railroads and an opulent Beaux Arts train station with a magnificent grand hall. By the 1970s, the hub was partially shuttered, and São Paulo's orchestra was looking for a home. The old station conveniently boasted the same shoebox shape as the world's great symphony spaces, like those in Boston and Vienna. In 1999, it was converted into an opulent 1,498-seat concert hall.

ILLUSTRATION BY JESSE HARP

THE WORLD'S LARGEST MODEL TRAIN USES 8 MILES OF TRACK AND ENOUGH WOOD TO BUILD 42 HOUSES.

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"Parade—Hoboken, New Jersey"

101 MASTERPIECES #45 ***THE AMERICANS***

The Big Picture

BY PHOTOGRAPHING THE LITTLE THINGS, ROBERT FRANK CHANGED AN ENTIRE NATION'S IMAGE OF ITSELF.

BY LUCAS REILLY

ON A HOT SEPTEMBER DAY IN 1957, Jack Kerouac sat on a New York City sidewalk holding America in his hands. At least, that's how it felt. In reality, he held a book of photographs taken by a Swiss photographer named Robert Frank. Like Kerouac, who had recently released *On the Road*, Frank had just completed a historic road trip across America. He had driven from New York City to Detroit to New Orleans to Los Angeles, photographing practically every big city and one-horse town along the way. He planned to publish the photos in a book and wanted Kerouac to write an introduction. So the two met outside of a party, plopped down on the sidewalk, and flipped through the pictures.

There were cowboys and cars, jukeboxes and tattered flags, cemeteries and shoe shiners, politicians and proselytizers. And, in one photo, a shining stretch of

THE AMERICANS BY ROBERT FRANK, PUBLISHED BY STEIDL/WWW.STEIDL.DE

Robert Frank, below, drove 10,000 miles and took 27,000 photos in the 1950s to make *The Americans*. Right: "San Francisco." Far right: "Trolley—New Orleans."

straight highway in New Mexico, darting like an arrow toward the horizon. Kerouac was sold. To him, the pictures did more than capture America: The black-and-white film had "caught the actual pink juice of human kind." He agreed to write some text to accompany it. "What a poem this is," he'd tell Frank. "You got eyes."

It hadn't been easy. Frank had driven more than 10,000 miles to capture those photos. Along the way, he used 767 rolls of film, filled uncountable tanks of gas, and endured two stints in jail. He knew the photographs were good. But he didn't necessarily think they would change photography—or how people see the country.

THE PICTURES in Robert Frank's *The Americans* are so ordinary that you just might miss what makes them extraordinary. They show people eating, sitting, driving, waiting—and that's about it. Rarely do the subjects look at the camera. When they do, they seem annoyed. Many of the photos are blurry, grainy, and smudged by shadows. But the devil is in those details: Together, the pictures comprise a skeptical portrait, an outsider's view of a country that was, at the time, all too sure of itself.

Born in Switzerland in 1924, Robert Frank grew up in a bubble about to burst. Before his 15th birthday, he saw the stock market crash, the Spanish Civil War erupt, Jews like his father lose their citizenship, and Nazis invade Poland. Frank's family worried that Switzerland was next. But it wasn't: Paradoxically, Frank's biggest complaint as a teenager was that the country was as small, quiet, and dull as ever. He desperately wanted out.

When Frank was 17, a path appeared. A professional photo retoucher named Hermann Segesser lived above his family, and one day, the teenager visited him. "I want to learn what you do," Frank said. Segesser took Frank under his wing, teaching him how to work a camera, develop negatives, make prints, and retouch photos. For the next five years, the shutterbug informally studied photography with Segesser and other Swiss lensmen, building a portfolio of "40 Fotos" that he hoped would be his ticket out of Switzerland.

In February 1947, Frank took his collection and sailed to New York City. He didn't plan to stay in New York long, says Sarah Greenough in her book *Looking In*. But he fell in love with the city's

THE AMERICANS BY ROBERT FRANK, PUBLISHED BY STEIDL/WWW.STEIDL.DE ("SAN FRANCISCO," "TROLLEY"). CORBIS (PORTRAIT)

energy. "Never before have I experienced so much in one week as here," he wrote to his parents. "I feel as if I'm in a film."

Life felt even more like a movie when he landed a gig as a staff photographer at *Harper's Bazaar*. At 22, Frank had already realized his dream—he was being paid to take photos. But taking pictures of purses and girdles for the magazine's fashion section quickly grew tedious. Frank became frustrated by how much control the editors had over his photos, and disillusionment set in. After just one month, he quit.

From there, he wandered. For six years, Frank traveled the world, stopping in Peru, Panama, Paris, London, and Wales. He got married. And he continued to hone his style, taking pictures of whatever he liked. Most of his photos were light, gentle, and romantic, and he dreamed of selling them to big magazines like *LIFE*, Jonathan Day writes in his book *Robert Frank's* The Americans*: The Art of Documentary Photography*. But his work was consistently rejected. He'd almost given up on making a career of his art when, in 1953, he returned to America to give it one final shot. "This is the last time I go back to New York and try to reach the top through my personal work," he said.

PHOTOGRAPHY WAS LIKE A JAZZ SOLO: SPONTANEOUS, RAW, PRESENT.

This time, the scene he found in New York was different. Frank had a Swiss friend, a designer named Herbert Matter, who hobnobbed with abstract painters like Hans Hofmann, Franz Kline, and Jackson Pollock. Frank was enamored with their world. His Greenwich Village apartment, overlooking Willem de Kooning's yard, was in a bohemian wonderland. He met Beat poets like Allen Ginsberg and Gregory Corso, and he soon met Walker Evans, who was famous for photographing the Great Depression.

Frank was taking pictures through it all, absorbing everything he could from his new community. From the abstract painters, he learned to embrace ambiguity and chance, to "follow your intuition—no matter how crazy or far-off or how laughed at it would be," he told William S. Johnson. The Beats encouraged him to treat photography as a jazz solo: spontaneous, raw, present. Most important, the photographers taught him to hate mainstream photography.

In the 1950s, photographs were crisp, sharp, and clean. A photo was perfect only if it followed the traditional rules of composition. Pictures were routinely upbeat, especially in popular magazines trumpeting the American way of life. That aesthetic reached its apogee in 1955, when the Museum of Modern Art's photography curator, Edward Steichen, introduced an exhibit called "The Family of Man." A display of 503 photographs from more than 60 countries, it depicted people as being the same everywhere. Dubbed the "greatest photographic exhibition of all time," it was wildly genteel, treating war and poverty as minor blemishes on the human race's report card.

But Frank, who had been in Europe during World War II and had visited the poorest parts of South America, knew better. "I was aware that I was living in a different world—that the world wasn't as good as that—that it was a myth that the sky was blue and that all photographs were beautiful," Frank told Johnson in 1989.

So he bought a used car and proved it.

POWERED BY A TANK OF GAS and a grant from the Guggenheim Foundation, Frank puttered west in June 1955. His network of famous friends had helped him win the grant, and money in his wallet meant he could do whatever he wanted. With nowhere in particular to go, he drove. He slept in cheap hotels and started each morning, wherever he was, by taking his Leica 35mm and photographing the closest bar or Woolworths. With Allen Ginsberg's mantra about spontaneity in mind—"first thought, best thought"—he snapped two or three photos in each spot and moved on. Then he'd visit the post office, the bus and train stations, the cemetery, and other five-and-dimes. He went wherever strangers congregated and tried to blend in. He rarely talked to anyone he photographed.

Shortly into his trip, Frank noticed a trend: The land of opportunity looked like a land of drudgery. Everybody seemed bored and tired. Frank sure felt it. As Greenough recounts, by the time a worn-out Frank reached Detroit, he wrote to his wife, Mary, that he just wanted to "lie down anywhere where it is nice and not think about photographs." Then his car broke down, and he couldn't help but use the extra time to photograph an African American concert, where he was arrested for having two license plates.

It wasn't the last time Frank ran into trouble, especially as he pressed further south. On the Arkansas border, he was accosted for no particular reason by a sheriff who pulled out a stopwatch and gave him five minutes to leave the state. In Port Gibson, Mississippi, a group of teenagers harassed Frank, calling him a communist. In McGehee, Arkansas, state police pulled his car over on U.S. 65. When the officers peered into the car window, seeing suitcases and cameras—and hearing Frank's foreign accent—they suspected he was a spy. They demanded that Frank hand over his film, briefly jailing him when he refused. Before his release, Frank had to sign his name under the heading CRIMINAL. It made him furious, and his empathy for others who were being treated unfairly grew. "America is an interesting country," he wrote to his parents. "But there is a lot here I do not like and I would never accept. I am trying to show this in my photos."

A SHERIFF PULLED OUT A STOPWATCH AND GAVE HIM FIVE MINUTES TO LEAVE THE STATE.

Originally, Frank had no agenda but to photograph everyday Americans doing everyday things. But the more he traveled the south, the more his viewfinder stumbled across people the American Dream had seemingly forgotten. More and more, he captured an America that everyone knew existed but preferred not to acknowledge; he looked for the overlooked and captured the weariness in their eyes.

It didn't matter whether Frank caught people standing around a jukebox or a coffin, his camera froze the same look on everybody's face. People looked in, looked out, looked at their feet, looked everywhere but at each other. In Miami Beach, an impatient elevator girl—trapped pressing buttons for strangers all day—stared into space. In Detroit, working-class men ate at a lunch counter, ignoring their neighbors and blankly looking ahead. In New

THE AMERICANS BY ROBERT FRANK. PUBLISHED BY STEIDL/WWW.STEIDL.DE

Orleans, a segregated trolley rambled by; a plaintive black man in the back stared sadly, deeply, into Frank's lens.

Frank was catching a direct contrast to the smiling humanity of Steichen's "The Family of Man" exhibit. But it didn't anger him—he was moved. "I had a feeling of compassion for the people on the street," he told Dennis Wheeler in 1977. He saw beauty in s highlighting the truth, even if it was mundane, sad, or small. There was something distinctly American, celebratory even, about giving the voiceless a voice. To Americans, these sights were too ordinary to notice. But Frank's foreign eyes saw how they affected and controlled everyday life. Automobiles, especially. To Frank, few things defined American life more. They were places to sleep, eat, enjoy a movie, joy ride, travel, wait, make love, and, for some, die. Most of all, cars were a way Americans could isolate themselves. Frank included.

After nine months, he had driven over 10,000 miles across more than 30 states. In all, he had taken 27,000 photographs. When he returned to New York in 1956, he whittled those images down to 1,000 large prints. He tacked and stapled the photos around his apartment like wallpaper. After four months, he chose just 83 of them for his book, *The Americans*.

ACCORDING TO JACK KEROUAC, Frank had "sucked a sad poem right out of America onto film." But the critics were not so kind. When the volume was first published in Paris, it hardly made a ripple, but the U.S. edition, published in 1959 with Kerouac's introduction, riled them up. The bottom line, critics said, was that *The Americans* was anti-American. Minor White described it as a "Utterly misleading! A degradation of a nation!" Bruce Downes scorned Frank as a "joyless man who hates the country of his adoption" and a "liar, perversely basking in … misery." John Durniak called it a "Wart-covered picture of America. If this is America we should burn it down and start again."

The Americans, after all, was the opposite of what readers saw in the *Saturday Evening Post* or an episode of *Leave It to Beaver*. There were no white picket fences, no pies cooling on windowsills. Not a single page would inspire a heartwarming Norman Rockwell painting. It was totally different from the simple, wholesome, patriotic photo essays everybody was used to. Idyllic as the critics believed things were, America was wrestling with dark issues—McCarthyism, segregation, poverty, and the Cold War chief among them. America was as lonely as it was big, and Frank had captured glimpses of all of it.

If that was a tough message to swallow, critics must have choked on Frank's style. *The Americans* contained everything good photography was supposed to avoid. Arthur Goldsmith of *Popular Photography* lambasted it as "flawed by meaningless blur, grain, muddy exposure, drunken horizons, and general sloppiness." But Frank, inspired by the abstract painters he admired, had been ambiguous by design, Day writes. A murky nation deserved murky photos. The composition was as unstable as the American Dream. More practically, the blur, shadows, and strange angles framed details that traditional techniques led viewers to ignore. In one photo, a starlet walks down a red carpet, her face entirely blurred. Our eye drifts to the haggard fans standing behind the velvet ropes, one chewing nervously on her fingernails. Frank's technique spotlighted details we tend to overlook. And in this case, he saw the people in the margins as the stars.

Despite the critical uproar, the book was largely ignored. Only 1,100 copies were sold, earning Frank $817.12. Soon, he deserted photography and took up filmmaking (most famously documenting the Rolling Stones' doped-up exploits in 1972). But it wouldn't be long before *The Americans* appeared hauntingly prescient. By the late 1960s, politicians and activists were addressing everything Frank had captured: discrimination, mind-numbing work environments, inequality. Street photographers, from Garry Winogrand to Lee Friedlander, were drawing inspiration from its crushing honesty. In an interview with NPR in 2009, legendary street photographer Joel Meyerowitz said, "It was the vision that emanated from the book that led not only me but my whole generation of photographers out into the American landscape." Today, *The Americans* is regularly hailed as the most influential photography book of the 20th century. Exhibitions across the globe have featured Frank's photos, and, just recently, a 1961 print of that segregated New Orleans trolley sold for $663,750.

More significantly, the book is no longer perceived as anti-American. Having grown up on a continent soaked in wartime propaganda, Frank loved the freedom the United States afforded him as an artist—nowhere else did he have as much liberty to experiment so wildly and to photograph so truthfully. "Opinion often consists of a kind of criticism," he said in 1958. "But criticism can come out of love." Uncovering the ugly side of America was Frank's way of forcing the land he adored to face its problems and improve. Photographing ordinary life was a way to level the playing field, to celebrate not just the little things, but the everyman. What could be more American?

Left: "Elevator—Miami Beach." Frank was fascinated with America's obssession with cars, as seen in the photo below, "Public Park—Ann Arbor, Michigan."

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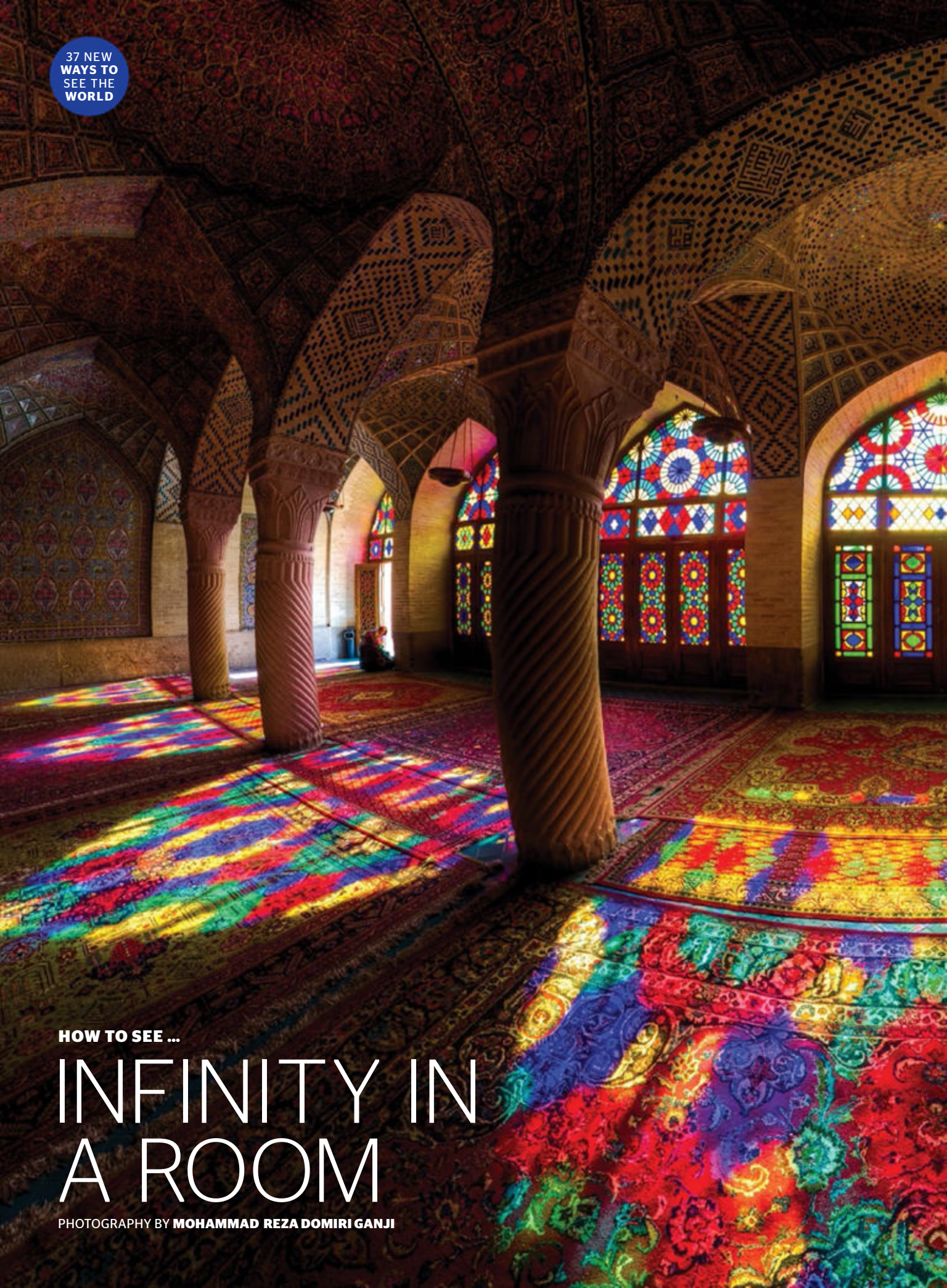

HOW TO SEE ...

INFINITY IN A ROOM

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **MOHAMMAD REZA DOMIRI GANJI**

Previous spread: A panoramic shot of Nasir al-Mulk Mosque (the Pink Mosque) in Shiraz, Iran, in full bloom. Above: Fisheye lenses capture a dazzling kaleidoscope at the Vakil Bath. Right: the Shah Mosque in Isfahan, Iran.

Photographing inside many of Iran's mosques requires a permit, so many spaces remain unseen except by those who worship. But that's not the only rule in these spaces. Since the 11th century, Islamic architects have avoided depicting animals, people, and other formerly pagan icons inside holy places. Instead, they've taken pains to decorate the walls with complex patterns, called arabesque, which resemble vines, leaves, and flowers.

The result of all these rules? Some of the most visually stunning and mathematically impressive architecture on the planet. The interconnecting geometric patterns represent the infinity of Allah and everything stretching beyond the material world. In fact, the designs get as close as artists have ever come to making truly infinite patterns. A 2007 study found that Islamic artisans knew as far back as the 13th century how to make interlocking patterns that don't repeat. Called quasicrystals, these patterns are so mathematically complex that it took scientists until the 1970s—more than 700 years!—to learn how to make them.

Not all these medieval examples are perfect, but that's because some artists intentionally made mistakes along the way—a humble way of saying that only God can make something infinitely perfect. The aesthetic became so popular it even drifted to secular circles, like the Vakil Bath above, proving that your geometry teacher was right: There is beauty in numbers.

HOW TO SEE ...

The Future in Bikes

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
MATTHEW REAMER

Kids in Oakland, Calif., tend to travel in packs—like kids everywhere do—but look closely and you'll see that their bikes are one-of-a-kind. The trend takes a cue from the customized car scene (they're called "scraper bikes" after scraper cars—the ones that have rims so oversized they scrape the inside of the wheel well). But more than just a showy mode of transport, these bikes are a movement. It began to crystallize around 2007, when Oakland bike hacker Tyrone Stevenson Jr., aka "the Scraper Bike King," started recruiting young men for an organization called the Scraper Bike Boys. Drawn by the opportunity to both express themselves creatively and be part of a positive community, its members commit to maintaining a 3.0 GPA while they build practical skills working in Stevenson's bike shop. With similar organizations popping up in Atlanta and Chicago, this DIY-driven subculture shows no sign of slowing down.

BAY AREA

HOW TO SEE ...

Serenity in the Scam

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **FLORIAN MÜLLER**

Along the Sri Lankan shore, you'll find men perched atop wooden stilts, angling for herring. The scene is beautiful and meditative—evocative of simpler times. But the art isn't actually ancient at all. Stilt fishing began about 70 years ago, shortly after World War II, when cliffside fishing holes became overcrowded. To gain an advantage, crafty sportsmen started casting their lines from unusual locations—mostly footed on wrecked boats and old airplanes—until someone improved upon the practice by building a dock out of stilts and twine. Men continued to fish like this for two generations—a skill that takes remarkable balance and agility. But they mostly stopped when the massive tsunami in 2004 severely depleted the fish population. Today, most of the stilt figures aren't actually fishermen, but actors using the setting as bait, making their daily wages off tourists. The ruse, of course, benefits all parties: the Sri Lankans make a living from tourism, while visitors happily pay to see tradition played out—even if only for show. Meanwhile, the fish swim worry-free.

HOW TO SEE ...

Strength in Numbers

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **URSULA SPRECHER** AND **ANDI CORTELLINI**

Everyone has their thing. Whether it's growing exotic flowers or dressing up like Santa in your spare time, your interests and obsessions help define *you*. But when your real passion is, say, collecting early-American toasters, it can be hard to find others who understand. That doesn't mean there isn't a group for you. As this Swiss duo's colorful portraits of hobby clubs show, no matter how niche your pastime is, you are never truly alone. Sure, we can take pride in being unique, but it's also reassuring to be reminded that community is only one person (or poodle) away.

Kite Club The kite originated in China around 400 BCE. Legend has it that General Han Hsin of the Han Dynasty once flew a kite over the walls of a city he was attacking to measure how far his army would have to tunnel to reach past the defenses.

1

2

4

5

Hobbie Buddies *(Kehrer Verlag) by Ursula Sprecher and Andi Cortellini is now available.*

3

6

1) Children's Chess Club You know who was also a chess club member? Thomas Jefferson. He often played against James Madison. **2) Orchid Club** Incidentally, the word *orchid* derives from the Greek *orchis*, or "testicle." In the 1300s, English speakers called it a "ballockwort" for, well, similar reasons. **3) Poodle Club** Not pictured: Babe Ruth, whose 1921 mascot was a French miniature poodle. **4) Pigeon Fancier's Club** Honorary members: Queen Elizabeth II and Mike Tyson—both huge fans of pigeon racing. **5) Hat Club** Established in 1750, America's first secret collegiate society was called the Flat Hat Club. **6) Santa Claus Group** These aren't new! The first jolly group, the Benevolent Order of Santa Claus, was organized in 1937.

Mikasa
HONDA

HOW TO SEE ...

Beyond the Cloth

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **HASSAN HAJJAJ**

For too many of us, the traditional garments worn by women in the Islamic world—hijabs, niqabs, and abayas—provide a lazy excuse to stereotype. The fabric often short-circuits assumptions about the wearer's faith, lack of independence, and resistance to modernity, well before she can communicate the spectrum of her beliefs for herself. That's why Hassan Hajjaj's series of motorbike-riding Moroccans is so important. It asks us to buck this instinct and look for the individuals beneath—in this case, many of them are hennna tattoo artists, mothers, or both, who jet around Marrakesh on stylish scooters. The garments, some of which come from the subjects' own closets and some of which the photographer helped design, are indicators of how a global fashion has broken through traditional communities. But they're also markers of personal style and attitude, showing how these badass women both embrace the modern world and protect their self-expression. It's evidence that when cultures clash, it can leave a more colorful world in its wake.

HOW TO SEE ...

CONDITIONS ARE PERFECT

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **SCOTT DICKERSON**

CONDITIONS ARE PERFECT | PHOTOGRAPHY BY **SCOTT DICKERSON**

Alaska has California beat in tidal shoreline—by a lot. The Golden State has about 3,427 miles of coast compared with the Last Frontier's 33,904 miles.

Surfers will tell you that surfing is a state of mind. Take the mantra one step further and there's nothing inherently Californian about the sport: Waves are waves. Even in Alaska. Even in 30-degree water. Even among the snow-capped mountains a helicopter ride away from civilization and its space heaters.

Compared to the air, the water in January along the Alaskan coastline is downright balmy at 28°F to 38°F, but the surfers Scott Dickerson photographed think conditions don't get much better. High-tech wetsuits are somewhat cozy, so hypothermia isn't the main worry. As Dickerson told GrindTV, "Help is not usually nearby, and the weather turns violent quickly."

So why brave the wilderness and the harsh conditions? The beauty, for one thing. The landscape is salve for the soul. The rare waves created by Alaska's bore tide are part of the draw, too. Bore tides occur when an outgoing channel pushes up against an incoming tidal surge. The waves that result can crest up to 20 feet tall and can carry a surfer for miles. But, as Dickerson puts it, "It's not all about riding a wave; sometimes the journey there and back is just as exciting."

The photos he's captured are a reminder to indulge in the now: We can pine for sun-kissed coastlines a world away, or we can grab the opportunity before us—as inhospitable as it may seem—and embrace it.

HOW TO SEE ...

Art in Utility

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **ISIDRO RAMIREZ**

You could look at the ubiquitous utility box as a necessary evil. If you're an urbanite, there's a good chance you might overlook it all together. But on a trip to Taiwan, Spanish photographer Isidro Ramirez discovered there's another way to see these bulky, dull monoliths: as a blank canvas. In Taipei, many are hand-painted with unique scenes from nature. Although the beautifying of the utility boxes was spearheaded by the private companies who own them, Taipei's department of cultural affairs has gone so far as to designate "graffiti zones," where street artists can work with no threat of fines. They get to create freely and the whole city benefits. The city also has plans to decorate traffic signal control boxes with policy announcements and designs, adding a whole new level of utility. For now, the delicate flowers, palm tree beaches, and green hilltops amid the concrete remind us that just because something exists out of necessity doesn't mean it can't also add some color to the world.

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HOW TO SEE ...

Space Is Always in Style

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **JAY GOULD**

On clear summer nights, dreamers of all ages still gather to launch model rockets. You'll find them in backyards and parks and open fields far from the city lights. And though the hobby feels like a relic of a long-gone era, the zeal for model rocketry endures. There's the pride in craft, the wonder of the physics, the belief that tinkering can propel a rocket higher, and, of course, the unadulterated joy in watching a ship launch into the night. Model rockets first became popular in the 1950s, after *Sputnik I*. Since then more than 500 million hobby rockets have blasted upward—a reminder to engineers and amateur enthusiasts alike that the sky isn't the limit.

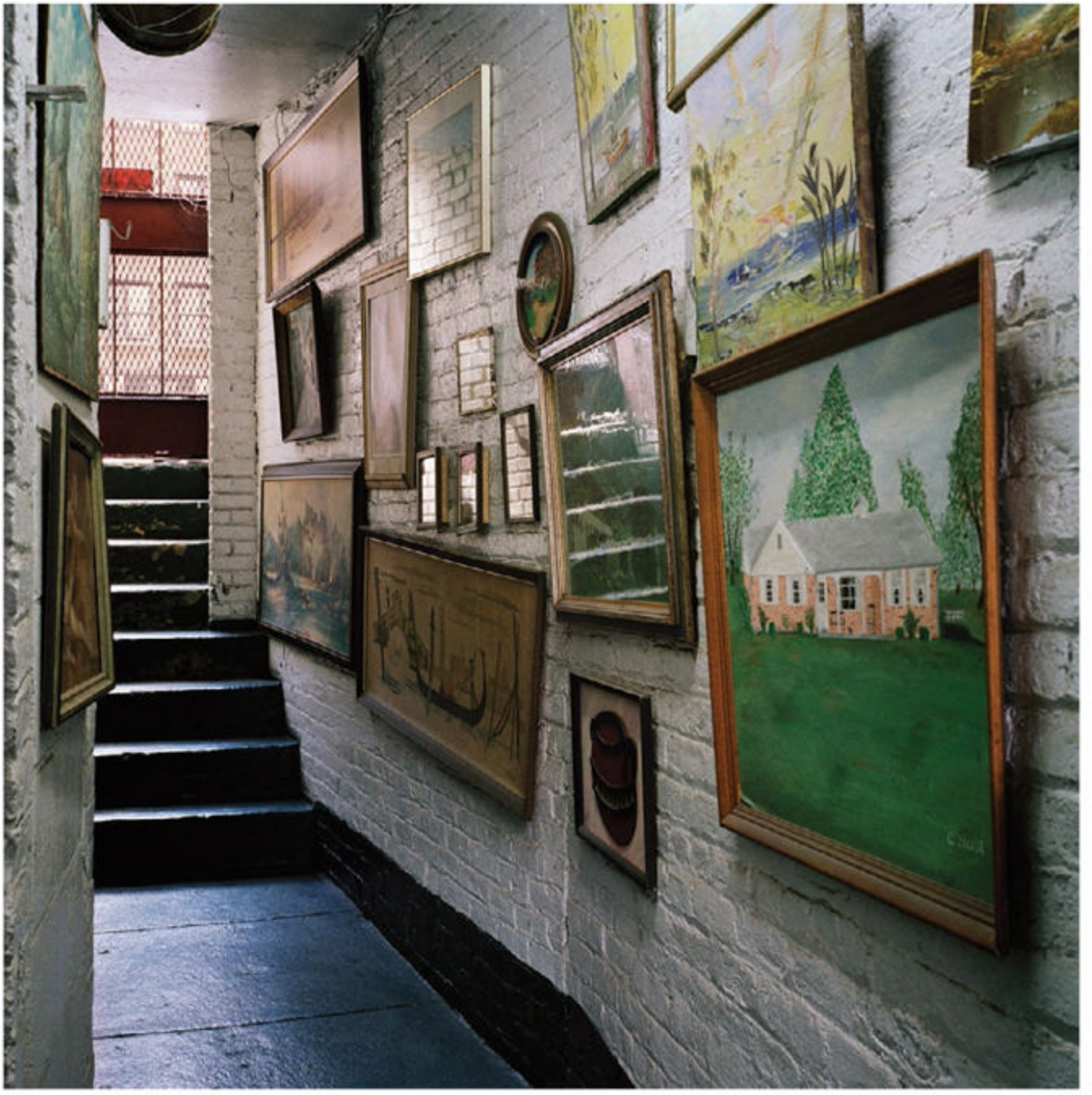
HOW TO SEE ...

Beauty in a Basement

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **GESCHE WÜRFEL**

Manhattan's skyline is an inspiration. Its sub-basements? Not so much. Those are the forgotten domain of superintendents, whose job it is to keep a building clean and its utilities humming. For many live-in supers, though, the basement is a place of their own: a room of responsibility, sure, but also for respite. Gesche Würfel has documented some of the city's most colorful. Here, supers have decorated with personal flair, collecting mementos and assembling materials abandoned or gifted to them by tenants who have moved on. The sweet and surprising details hint at a pride in workplace that makes even a space as unlikely as a boiler room feel like home.

Basement Sanctuaries *by Gesche Würfel (Schilt Publishing) is now available.*

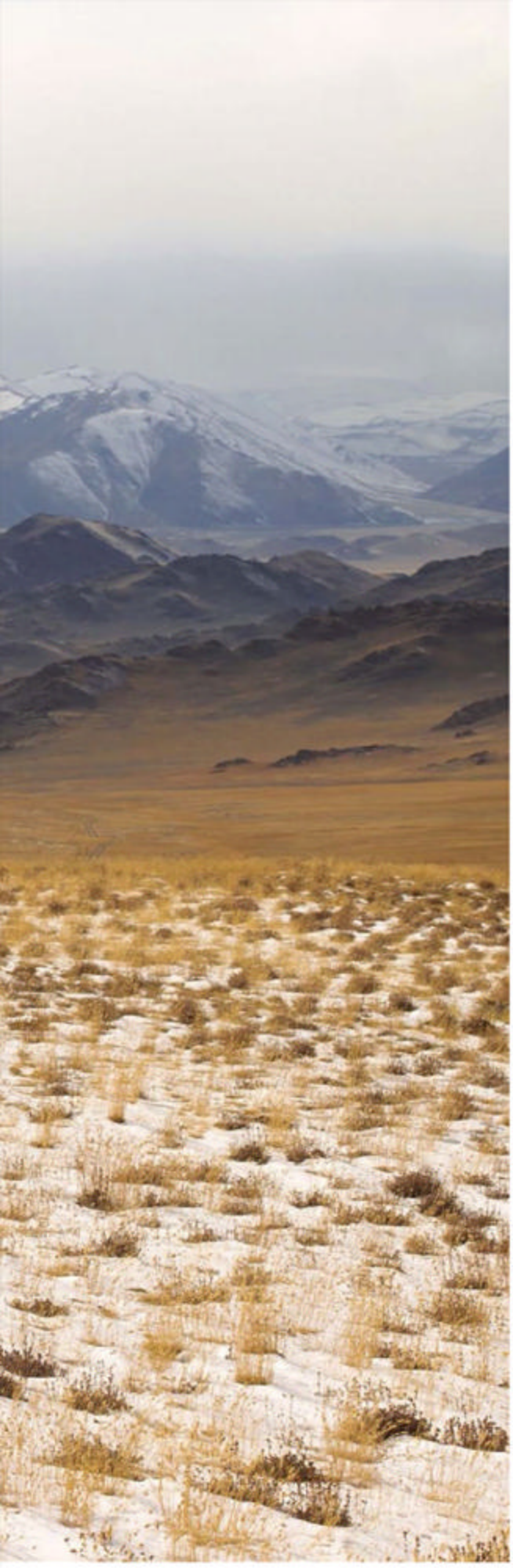


HOW TO SEE ...

A CHANGING WORLD

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **ASHER SVIDENSKY**

A CHANGING WORLD | PHOTOGRAPHY BY **ASHER SVIDENSKY**



Left: Irka Bolen, a 13-year-old boy, trains to hunt. Above: Ashol-Pan holds a golden eagle, whose wingspan is 78 inches; like most teens, she has to keep up with schoolwork.

High in the mountains of Mongolia, upon their 13th birthdays, young Kazakh boys train to become eagle hunters. For males, this has been a rite of passage that dates back centuries. But now, a girl named Ashol-Pan, the daughter of an eagle hunter, has broken this ancient glass ceiling to become one of Mongolia's first recorded apprentice eagle huntresses.

It's because of the vast landscape surrounding Mongolia's Altai Mountains that nomadic people have employed eagles to help hunt for centuries. The birds—always female because they are larger—are taken from their nests as eaglets and trained to team up with humans. After seven years of work, they're released back into the wild.

Even with the aid of these winged predators, conditions for hunting are fierce: Hunters trek for days on horseback, climbing to the tops of mountains to spy on prey below in temperatures that can drop to –40°F. When a hunter spots a fox or wolf, the eagle is released, swooping down and stopping the animal.

Genghis Kahn allegedly employed 5,000 eagle hunters in his personal guard, but today, there are no more than 400 in existence. The practice is a relic in a quickly modernizing country whose economy—thanks to its $1.3 trillion in mineral deposits—is one of the fastest-growing in the world. It's inspiring to see ancient traditions endure in a place like this—but it's also exciting to witness how they evolve.

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3 PLACES TO EAGLE (YES, EAGLE IS A VERB!) ›
WHO DESIGNED THE TOOTHBRUSH? ›
A DINOSAUR TO-DO LIST ›
+ OTHER STUFF WE LOVE RIGHT NOW ›

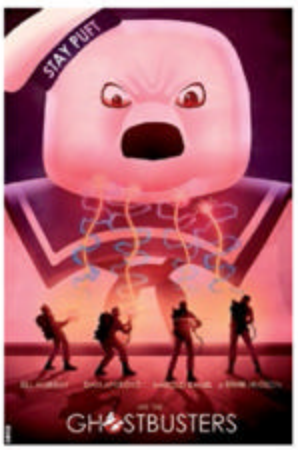
ILLUSTRATION BY FABIAN CIRAOLO

Cult Favorites

Thomas Olivri is the ultimate fan of fandom. As a kid, he adored comic books and cult films. As a grown-up copywriter at a French advertising firm, he still does—but he loves the culture that grows around these niche interests even more. In 2012 Olivri started Geek-Art.net, a place where obsessives can show off art projects devoted to their beloved characters, share fervent displays of their own fandom, and,

most importantly, bond with people who love the same things they do. Now his curated blog is a printed anthology that catalogs both creative fan tributes—like a Boston Terrier dressed as Yoda and drawings of Superman in casual wear—and artwork from professional designers and photographers honoring the likes of *Jem*, *Ghostbusters*, and *Star Wars*. It's a collection no superfan should be without!

—**Caitlin Schneider**



Geek-Art *(Chronicle Books) by Thomas Olivri is available now.*

SPEED READ

If you read just six sentences about the Latino underdogs who went head-to-head with MIT at a national robotics competition …

Spare Parts
Four Undocumented Teenagers, One Ugly Robot, and the Battle for the American Dream
(Farar, Strauss & Giroux, $25)

"The kids [from Carl Hayden High School] had shown up with Stinky, a garishly painted plastic robot that was partially assembled from scrap parts."

"It was their first time participating in any kind of underwater-robotics competition, but they had entered the highest division, going up against a field thick with veteran college teams."

"Contestants had to build an ROV [remotely operated vehicle] that could measure a submarine's length, calculate its depth, and navigate inside the structure to recover the captain's bell."

"They had problems from the start … while other robots zipped out, their machine sat motionless on the floor."

"They decided to repair it surgically, with seven team members detaching and lifting various parts."

"And the winner of the Marine Advanced Technology Education ROV Explorer-class championship is … "

HOT DATE

January 8
ELVIS'S 80TH BIRTHDAY

3 Essential Elvis Talking Points

- Elvis was a natural blond who started dying his hair in high school.
- He bought Franklin Roosevelt's presidential yacht.
- He never performed outside North America.

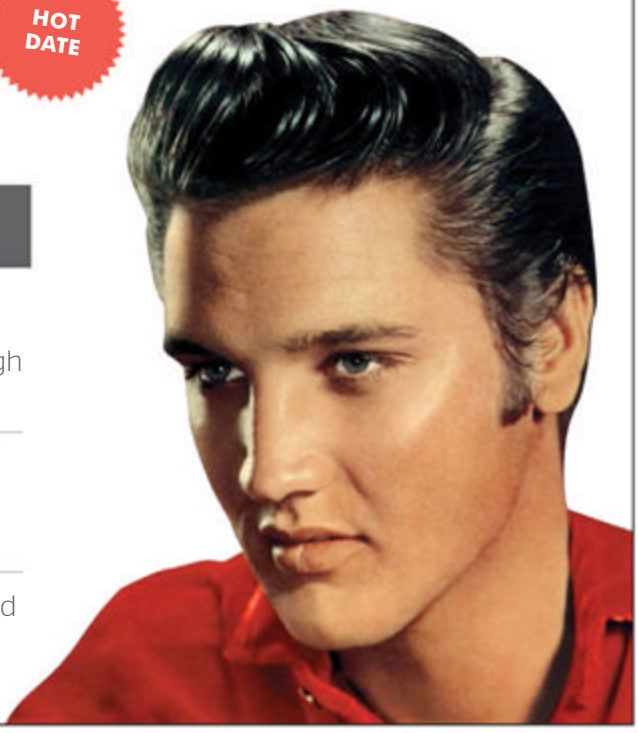


ILLUSTRATION BY MATT FERGUSON (ANGRY STAY PUFT). PHOTOGRAPHY BY DANIEL POLEVOY (DOUGLAS MCARTHUR); ALAMY (PRESLEY)

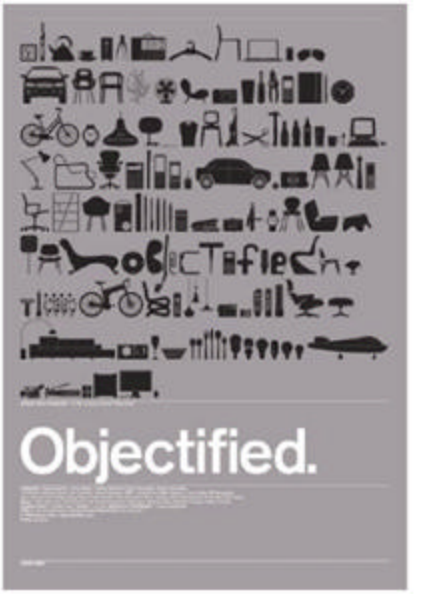
What to Watch to: *UNDERSTAND EVERYDAY DESIGN*

Design Is One: Lella & Massimo Vignelli (2012)
Directors: Roberto Guerra and Kathy Brew
Available on iTunes

Take an iconic logo—Ford, American Airlines, New York City's subway map—and there's a decent chance the Vignellis created it. "If you can't find it, design it," was the couple's motto, and that's what they spent 50 years doing after they moved to New York from Italy in 1965. This film chronicles their incredible partnership.

Eames: The Architect and the Painter (2011)
Directors: Jason Cohn and Bill Jersey
Available on iTunes and Google Play

Charles Eames and his wife, Ray, defined the mid-century American living room with their plywood and fiberglass furniture. Despite a fraught relationship, they also made games, films, and even splints for wounded servicemen. Their affordable products helped put good design in the hands of the middle class.



Objectified. (2009)
Director: Gary Hustwit
Available on iTunes and Google Play

Why do we love certain objects and remain completely oblivious to others? Hustwit poses this question and more to top industrial designers—the people behind everyday objects like toothbrushes and laptops—as he explores the art of things. As Henry Ford once said, "Every object tells a story"; this film is your chance to hear many of them.

THE PAPER TRAIL

Our favorite reads right now

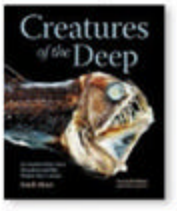
BRAIN CANDY → BRAIN KALE

The Bridge: The Building of the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge
by Gay Talese
(Bloomsbury USA, $35)

Taleses's poetically reported ode to the men who built what was the country's largest suspension bridge is the rare coffee table book where the text is as potent as the images.

Quirky Sleeps
by Bruce and Susan Armstrong
(Armstrong Travel Ventures, $19)

If you're a cross-country traveler who's tired of roadside motels, this guide is for you. Learn where to spend the night in a wigwam (Holbrook, Arizona) or a treehouse (Eureka Springs, Arkansas). If you've got sea legs, there are also plenty of places where you can be rocked to sleep on a boat.



Creatures of the Deep, 2nd edition
by Erich Hoyt (Firefly Books, $40)

The acorn worm, which feeds on seafloor sediment and may have given rise to vertebrates, and the yeti crab (as hairy and scary as it sounds) are two of the thousands of species discovered since the 2001 edition of this visual journey to the bottom of the sea.

The Woman Who Borrowed Memories
by Tove Jansson
(NYRB Classics, $17)

Set against the waves and winds of the Baltic Sea, Jansson's weird and funny stories about solitary people grappling with lost or stolen memories—or, in one comical case, an interloping squirrel—are smart and life-affirming.

The Public Domain Review
edited by Adam Green
(PDR Press, $40)

Like the eponymous site, this compendium of esoteric documents whose copyrights have lapsed is a brainy and hilarious way to waste time. Start by checking out the catalog of criminal prosecution of animals (snails! pigs!) the 1480s.

DESIGN BY MASSIMO VIGNELLI (*DESIGN IS ONE*). COURTESY FIRST RUN FEATURES (*EAMES: THE ARCHITECT AND THE PAINTER*). DESIGN BY BUILD (*OBJECTIFIED*).

THE SIMPLIFIER

PSYCHOLOGISTS Described by CHEESE

PSYCHOLOGIST	CHEESE
Freud	Limburger
Like the Oedipal complex, the desire to eat cheese that smells like feet is weird and embarrassing. It's also undeniable proof of the power of the unconscious.	
Jung	Cheez Whiz
The only thing more ubiquitous than the archetypes of humanity's shared consciousness is liquid cheese food.	
Skinner	Cheese puff
Because free will feels like an illusion. You have no choice but to eat the entire bag.	
Maslow	American cheese
In the same way that protective plastic wrap trumps flavor, food and safety come before self-actualization.	

Pop Culture Syllabus: DINOSAURS

DINO'S LAST SUPPER

Some 66 million years ago, an asteroid landed in the ocean near what is now Mexico. The impact may have ended dinosaurs' existence on Earth, with the exception of one group: birds. Now fossils collected from the Hell Creek formation, which stretches across North and South Dakota and Montana, reveal how dinosaurs like the Triceratops and the T. Rex, as well as the Stangerochampsa (like an American alligator), Didelphodon (an extinct mammal), and Habrosaurus (an ancient salamander) once roamed the swampy American West—and what happened when they died.

VISIT "The Last American Dinosaurs: Discovering a Lost World," Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, Washington, D.C. (November 25, 2014–2018)

FOSSIL FINDS

Recent paleontological discoveries include a plant-eating sauropod estimated to weigh 85 tons, stretching 130 feet long and 65 feet tall; a vegetarian dinosaur from Patagonia named Dreadnoughtus, which weighed 65 tons and spanned 85 feet, and new skeletal remains of a 100-million-year-old carnivore called Spinosaurus that could swim and walk. What we can learn from what the dinosaurs left behind doesn't stop there.

READ "Prehistory's Brilliant Future," by Michael J. Novacek, *The New York Times*

NAME THE 'SAURUS REX

When a sauropod with a 37-foot-long neck was discovered in Argentina last fall, paleontologists named it Dreadnoughtus schrani: "Dreadnought" for an early 20th-century British Royal Navy boat, "schrani" for the entrepreneur, Adam Schran, who helped fund the research. Market tested, the name was a runaway hit! Comparatively, Tyrannosaurus rex was named in 1905 by Henry Fairfield Osborn "to impress people with the vigor of paleontology."

READ "The Dreadnoughtus Effect: Why dinosaurs have awesome names" by Britt Peterson, *The Boston Globe*

IF IT WALKS LIKE A DINOSAUR

This six-part documentary narrated by Kenneth Branagh might be considered a TV fossil. But the 1999 classic, with its computer-generated imagery and animatronics and its narration of historical scenes as if they were happening now, broke ground on a docu-practice that's now standard. According to *The Guinness Book of World Records*, it remains the most expensive documentary series per minute ever made. And while the special effects might not hold up, the facts certainly do.

WATCH "Walking with Dinosaurs," BBC

ALAMY (FREUD, JUNG, SKINNER, BALD EAGLE), ISTOCK (LIMBURGER, CHEEZ WHIZ, CHEESE PUFF, AMERICAN CHEESE, TYRANNOSAURUS REX)

3 Places to View Bald Eagles in Flight

January is National Bald Eagle Watch Month; it's also one of the best months to spot the majestic predator in action. Wake early and bundle up: They hunt at sunrise, and cold, clear days are the best.

1 KLAMATH RIVER BASIN, CALIFORNIA AND OREGON BORDER

The Klamath Basin hosts as many as 1,000 bald eagles in January and February. During the Bear Valley Fly Out, from December to March, hundreds of roosting eagles fly from the Bear Valley National Wildlife Refuge to nearby areas to dine on waterfowl and rodents.

2 QUABBIN RESERVOIR, MASSACHUSETTS

Before 1989, bald eagles hadn't been observed nesting in Massachusetts since the early 20th century. Now nearly 30 active nests have been confirmed. The birds roam the Quabbin Reservoir (the main supplier of Boston's drinking water) and are best seen here in February.

3 CASSVILLE, WISCONSIN

Once down to only 100 nesting pairs, the bald eagle population in Wisconsin has soared to 1,337 nesting territories thanks to protection efforts, as well as the Mississippi River, where dams and power plants keep the water from completely freezing over. Bald Eagle Days in January draw crowds, but quiet is enforced: Startled eagles will flee, expending energy they need to survive the winter months.

Of the 70,000 bald eagles in the world, half of them live in Alaska.

The Best '90s GUIDE TO THE WEB

Travel back to 1997 and let this quintessentially awkward family tell you everything you already know about the Internet. Invite the neighbors over, pop the instructional video into your VCR* and adjust the tracking "for the clearest picture," then relax as the Jamisons reveal all the secrets to exploring the web, step by step: First, dial up with America Online and open a few pages with Netscape Navigator. From there, surf—yes, surf!—the web with nifty search engines like AltaVista, Infoseek, or Yahoo. With those, you can do amazing things: download screen savers, play chess, and even send emails to President Clinton! According to Mrs. Jamison, the Internet will improve your kids' grades and even their communication skills. "Now that I've gotten on the Internet," says her son, Peter, "I'd rather be on my computer than doing just about anything!" It's like they predicted the future.

* "The Kids Guide to the Internet" is also available on YouTube.

BY LUCAS ADAMS

NAME: _____ AGE: _____

SUPERPOWER: _____

1 Which character did James Avery, "Uncle Phil" of *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, voice on the animated series *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*?

A Shredder
B Krang
C Leonardo
D Rocksteady

2) UCLA students wrote an algorithm to identify what?
A Jaywalkers
B Street gangs
C Christmas shoplifters
D Potential skateboarders

3) Which one of the following was not a name of one of anthropologist Jane Goodall's chimps?
A Passion
B Franz
C Fifi
D Freud

4) Bluetooth technology is named after what?
A A medieval dentist
B A secret WWII radar operation
C A Viking king
D A breed of wolf

5 St. Roch is the patron saint of all but what?

A Dogs
B Istanbul
C Bachelors
D Locksmiths

6) The White House's Press Briefing Room was originally what?
A A swimming pool
B A stable
C A buffet
D A waiting room

7) Which company was the first to build a car with air conditioning?
A Ford
B Tucker
C Packard
D Volkswagen

8) Who did *Time* call "the Black Leonardo" in 1941?
A George Washington Carver
B Booker T. Washington
C Madam C.J. Walker
D W.E.B. Du Bois

9) Which musician released an album whose entire profits went to pay off his debt with the IRS?
A MC Hammer
B Johnny Cash
C Willie Nelson
D Michael Jackson

10) Australian Bruce Holland died during an eating contest with what kind of food?
A Chili pie
B Puffer fish sushi
C Chicken drumsticks
D Vegemite

11) Which movie was Michael Caine talking about when he said, "I have never seen it, but by all accounts it is terrible. However, I have seen the house that it built, and it is terrific."
A *Jaws: The Revenge*
B *Bewitched*
C *Cars 2*
D *Gnomeo and Juliet*

12) Which Beatle has a flower named after him?
A John
B Paul
C Ringo
D George

13) Which state was the first in the modern era with a government-sanctioned lottery?
A New Hampshire
B Colorado
C California
D New York

14) What did Civil War officer Egbert Ludovicius Viele have built into his coffin?
A A buzzer
B Airholes
C A fan
D A can phone

15) Brazil has 77 what?
A Piranha species
B Uncontacted tribes
C Forbidden islands
D Shrines to Pele

ANSWERS
1. A
2. B
3. B
4. C
5. D (St. Baldomerus is the patron saint of locksmiths.)
6. A
7. C (The system took up half the trunk space and had no thermostat.)
8. A
9. C (It was titled *The IRS Tapes: Who'll Buy My Memories?*)
10. A (His last words were "Jeez, this chili pie is hot.")
11. A
12. B (The McCartney Hybrid Tea Rose)
13. A
14. A (It was wired to ring the house of the superintendent of West Point. It never did.)
15. B

Hey, overachiever! If you scored an Also Pretty Good on this quiz, enter the coupon code **HONORSYSTEM** at store.mentalfloss.com and save an extra 15% on your order.
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0-4 Pretty Good
5-7 The Best
8-9 The Worst
10-15 Also Pretty Good

ALAMY (UNCLE PHIL)

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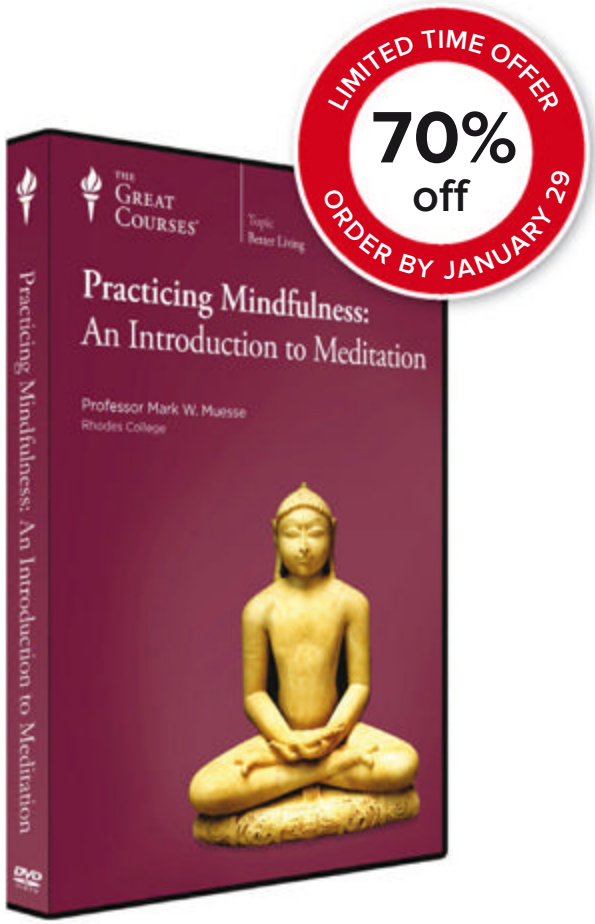

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5. Position—Where to Be for Meditation
6. Breathing—Finding a Focus for Attention
7. Problems—Stepping-Stones to Mindfulness
8. Body—Attending to Our Physical Natures
9. Mind—Working with Thoughts
10. Walking—Mindfulness While Moving
11. Consuming—Watching What You Eat
12. Driving—Staying Awake at the Wheel
13. Insight—Clearing the Mind
14. Wisdom—Seeing the World as It Is
15. Compassion—Expressing Fundamental Kindness
16. Imperfection—Embracing Our Flaws
17. Wishing—May All Beings Be Well and Happy
18. Generosity—The Joy of Giving
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